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ABSTRACT

A secondary analysis of data collected by Thomas Patterson during the 1976 presidential campaign was made to test three hypotheses: (1) respondents in a media-rich environment will show higher levels of political information holding than respondents in a media-poor environment, (2) differences in information holding levels between a media-rich community and a media-poor community will be greatest at the lower levels of political interest and smallest at the highest levels of political interest, and (3) differences in political information holding between a media-rich community and a media-poor community will be greatest at the lowest education levels and smallest at the highest education levels. The original data were collected in Erie, Pennsylvania, and Los Angeles, California, beginning in February 1976 and ending in November of that year, following the election. For each hypothesis, an incremental F test was used to assess whether the final term entered into the regression equation was responsible for a significant increase in the variance accounted for in information holding. The results suggest an interaction effect between media richness/media poorness and education, though it is small. It would seem that although effects were made to control for other factors believed to contribute to variance in the dependent variable, the study design could not directly take into account all potentially important variables that may contribute to the apparently higher levels of political information holding in Los Angeles. (HOD)

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The Effects of Media Richness/Media Poorness on the Accuracy of Assessments About Candidate Stands on Issues

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ABSTRACT

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The media richness of a community seems to be associated with higher accuracy of assessments of candidate stands on campaign issues. Media richness also appears to interact with education levels, such that those at the lowest education levels appear to benefit most from the richness of the media environment.

A favorite part of the folklore of American journalism is the notion that a community is best served when a large number of mass communciation channels exist to supply its informational needs. This view, historically grounded in libertarianism and free-market economics, is widely held. It often is expressed in journalism texts,[1] publications written for working journalists,[2] accounts in the media themselves,[3] and academic literature on mass communication.[4] Further, federal regulators have embraced it in rulings that restrict cross-ownership of broadcasting stations.[5] Implicitly, the existence of a large number of mass communications channels is seen as having two primary benefits --- to enhance the diversity and quality of information available to a community. The diversity of information is believed to be greater because there are more media "voices" carrying news, opinion, entertainment and other information to the community. The quality of information is presumed to be higher because the existence of a greater number of mass communications channels supposedly produces competition among media organizations, which is seen as resulting in a struggle to provide products that ultimately are the most functional (in some way) for readers or viewers.

There is an American tradition of research into the implications of having a relatively greater or fewer number of mass communication channels serving a community, though it is a tradition that has concentrated largely on analyzing media content.[6] Many fewer studies have taken the next step and attempted to determine whether any intended social benefits accrue from having a relatively larger number of mass communication channels serving a community -- that is, whether people living in "richer" media environments tend to be better served in

some socially functional way than citizens in "poorer" media environments. This study falls into the latter category. It investigates whether citizens in a richer media environment tended to be better informed about candidate stands on issues in the 1976 presidential campaign than citizens in a poorer media environment. More broadly, this is an attempt to address the issue of the quality of the mass media environment. If, other things equal, those living in the richer media environment indeed benefit in some socially functional way from that environment, it can be argued that the richer environment may also be the higher-quality environment.

Before proceeding, it may be helpful to discuss more fully the notions of competition and media richness/media poorness. These terms are widely -- and somewhat interchangeably -- used in literature relevant to this paper. In past published research competition generally has been defined implicitly as two or more media organizations trying to market similar products (most often a general-interest daily newspaper) within the same geographical area, such as a community, a metropolitan area, a state or a region. In many ways, that definition parallels the concept of media richness/media poorness introduced by Chaffee and Wilson.[7] They conceptually define media richness/media poorness in terms of the number of media informational resources available in a given locale. Given that definition, media richness/media poorness seems to be the more accurate description of the phenomenon that has been examined in most studies. Competition would seem to embrace more than simply the coexistence of two or more media outlets in a given locale. It suggests a struggle among those organizations for readers or viewers or customers, whereas the concept of media richness/media poorness makes no presumption of such a struggle. Whatever the rubric,

competition and media richness/media poorness have shared essentially the same operational definitions in past research. This author prefers media richness/media poorness as the conceptually truer label for the phenomenon being explored. It simply needs to be noted that in discussions of the previous research, where the terms competition and media richness/media poorness are used, they refer to the same thing at the operational level.

Competition, Content and the Audience

The preponderance of past empirical research on media competition or media richness/media poorness has focused primarily on content differences, and, to a lesser extention media credibility.

These studies have produced somewhat disparate findings. On the whole, however, no consistently strong effects from competition have been documented. There apparently are few differences in topics covered by newspapers in competitive and non-competitive markets, though there is evidence that newspapers in the competitive markets tended to have a somewhat higher news-to-advertising ratios and somewhat higher advertising rates.[8] One study of communities found a slight tendency for the newspapers in the non-competitive markets to provide fewer locally produced stories, but overall, content differences were not striking.[9] Analyses of newscasts by the three competing commercial television networks found a 70 percent overlap in stories covered by at least two of the three networks on their Monday through Friday broadcasts.[10] Duplication dropped on weekend broadcasts. An examination of the effect of Federal Communications Commission policy encouraging the development of ultra-high frequency (UHF) television stations as a way to expand the diversity of public interest programming concluded that the policy had not widely "borne fruit."[11] Another line of

research on competition indicates that while readers generally believe it is bad for a community to have only one daily newspaper, press credibilty is about the same in non-competitive markets as it is in competitive markets.[12]

Fewer than a handful of studies have looked at the effects that media competition or media richness/media poorness may have had on the audiences or readers. In one that did, Stempel found that in an Ohio community in which the same organization owned all local media outlets, respondents were less able to identify international, national, state and local political figures than were respondents living in two similar Ohio communities used for comparison.[13] In another attempt to look at the effect of competition, Clarke and Fredin, using data from a nationwide survey, found that residents of communities with competing newspapers were able to give more reasons for supporting or opposing political candidates than were residents of communities without competing papers.[14] They considered this a measure of political information holding. A third piece of research, the Chaffee and Wilson study, found that the richness of media environment was positvely correlated with greater diversity in the public problems agenda held by citizens.[15] Media richness was operationalized in terms of the number of locally based daily newspapers in a community.

This project intends to build upon those foundations established by Stempel, Clarke and Fredin and Chaffee and Wilson, all of whom have gone beyond content analyses in examining the effects of media competition or media richness/media poorness upon social processes in communities. This project will leave aside questions about the diversity of public issue agendas, such as those studied by Chaffee and Wilson. It will instead seek to compare political information holding levels -- specifically, how much respondents knew about the 1976 presi-

dential candidates' stands on campaign issues -- between citizens living in different media environments, media-richer Los Angeles and media-poorer Erie, Pa.

The data used in the anlayses that follow were collected by Thomas Patterson during a panel study of the 1976 presidential election.[16] And though this data set has shortcomings for the purposes to which it is put here, it also offers some advantages over the data sets used in the Stempel and the Clarke and Fredin studies.

Political Information Holding and The Media Environment

One difference between this and the previous studies is the nature of the dependent variable used. Stempel and Clarke and Fredin employed very different definitions of political information holding. Stempel sought to measure a generalized sort of political information holding by asking respondents to identify key political figures from a list of names. He characterized this as a measure of knowledge of current events. Such information, however, would seem to be of limited utility for most respondents. It seems unlikely, for example, that such information would come to bear in any kind of political decision-making, such as voting. Clarke and Fredin relied on a subjective measure of political information holding. The concept was operationalized as the number of reasons respondents could give for favoring or rejecting political alternatives, without regard to the completeness, sophistication or accuracy of such reasons. Having reasons for perceiving or acting, they argue, equips a person to explain his or her choices and helps provide a cognitive framework for acquiring and processing additional information. As Clarke and Fredin acknowledge, there are frailties in this -- or any -- approach to defining information holding. It is hard in any kind of research to disentangle the media effects on one's dependent

variable from the effects of other environmental factors. That would be very problematic using the Clarke and Fredin measures of political information holding, since no attempt is made to weed out reasons based on simple political prejudice or long-term political socialization influences from the reasons based on recent media presentations to which a respondent may have been exposed. The operational definition of political information holding used in this study takes another tack. Conceptually, political information holding is defined here as knowledge about the institutions, processes, actors or issues associated with the governance of people in this nation. Of particular concern is political information holding about the major issues of the 1976 presidential campaign. The operational definition is the accurate assessment of the Republican and Democratic candidates' positions on those issues. Information holding would seem to vary along a continuum of no accurate knowledge of the candidates' stands on the issues to accurate knowledge of all the stands on all the issues. This measure of political information holding has its own set of shortcomings, as well. Having specific knowledge about candidates' stands on issues may be of little consequence for many individuals, in that it may have no effect on voting decisions. Further, it implies a certain omniscience on the part of the researcher about what constitutes the important issues of the campaign. Nevertheless, information about campaign issues is <u>potentially</u> functional for many individuals in helping make or defend vote decisions. And it is information that the mass media in this country generally make a commitment, to a greater or lesser extent, to try to convey to voters during the campaign period.

The Patterson data set used here offers yet another methodological alternative to the Stempel and Clarke and Fredin approaches. While Clarke and Fredin

were able to compare political information holding across more than 60 communities, the sample included relatively few individuals from each of those communities. The Patterson data set "errs" in the other direction. Only two communities are compared. However, approximately 400 respondents were interviewed in each of those communities. The sample size lends a degree of stability to the measures of political information holding in the two communities, a degree that was not possible to achieve at the community level in the Clarke and Fredin study. Further, it allows for solid statistical controls of other factors known to influence political information holding, such as education, political interest, etc. Finally, unlike Stempel, it allows for a comparision of media environments that truly differ in richness. In choosing three similar cities, Stempel examined only community-level differences that may be attributed to variation in media ownership structure. In fact, the media environments of those communities, as reflected in the number of mass communication channels, differed very little.

Hypothesis One, therefore, offers a test of a relationship similar to the one examined by Clarke and Fredin. Specifically, other things equal, respondents in a media-rich environment will show higher levels of political information holding than respondents in a media-poor environment. This is a main effects hypothesis.

Interaction Effects and the Media Environment

Interaction effects have frequently been found between media-related variables and other variables. The so-called knowledge gap, in which the increasing flow of information to a community appears to widen the gap in knowledge between the more highly educated and the lesser educated, is one

example of an interaction effect.[17] It seems plausible that the richness of the media environment may also produce differential effects in political information holding among members of certain social groups. Indeed, two such interaction effects will be postulated here. As previously indicated, one perceived benefit of having a large number of mass communcation channels serving a given community is that it results in better media products, presumably an outgrowth of competition for readers and viewers. One way this may be manifested is in the ability of the mass media to reach hard-to-interest and hard-to-educate social groups. Another way may be the capacity of the media to more precisely target products to particular social groups. For example, if only one newspaper serves a community, it must (ideally) target its editorial product for everyone in that community. In striving to please one group, it may alienate another. If three newspapers serve a community, they may effectively divvy up the audience, with each more successfully targeting products to more homogenous segments of the total market. In short, the richer media environment may effectively be the "better" media environment in terms of its capacity or proclivity to educate, entertain and inform readers and viewers.

Political information holding is known to be positively associated with higher educational levels and greater interest in political affairs. The richer media environment may act to reduce differences in policital information holding normally associated with those factors. Put another way, lesser-educated persons living in richer media environments may show higher levels of political information holding than similar lesser-educated persons living in poorer media environments. A similar pheonomenon may occur for those with lesser interest in political affairs. This information gap should decrease at the higher levels of

education and political interest, as these would be individuals most likely to know about political processes, institutions, actors and issues, regardless of the media environment in which they lived. In short, these would be the individuals who would most likely make a point to know about political affairs anyway.

Hypotheses Two and Three, therefore, postulate that the richness of the media environment will have certain differential effects -- interaction effects -- on political information holding.

Hypothesis Two predicts an interaction between media richness media poorness and education, such that the differences in political information holding between a media-rich community and a media-poor community will be greatest at the lowest education levels and smallest at the highest education level.

Hypothesis Three predicts an interaction between media richness/media poorness and political interest such that the differences in information holding levels between a media-rich community and a media-poor community will be greatest at the lowest levels of political interest and smallest at the highest levels of political interest.

Methodology

As previously indicated, this is a secondary analysis of data collected by Patterson during the 1976 presidential campaign. Data were collected in two cities, Erie, Pa., and Los Angeles, beginning in February 1976 and ending in November that year, following the election.[18] Respondents were contacted up to six times throughout the election period.[19] Demographic information was collected in the first wave of interviews in which a respondent took part. A comparison of samples from the two communities shows that the median age among respondents in each city was about the same -- 42 in Erie and 41 in Los Angeles

(Table 1) -- and that the distribution across age cohorts was almost identical.[20] Women were somewhat overrepresented in the Erie sample -- about 59 percent, compared with 51 percent in Los Angeles. The educational distribution of the samples differed. Roughly two-thirds of the Erie sample fell into the two lowest educational groupings, which included high school graduates or below. That compared with only about 42 percent for the Los Angeles sample. (Table 2) The distribution of party partisans was roughly equivalent, with both communities having about 60 percent Democratic identifiers, 30 percent Republican identifiers and 10 percent independent or other. And, as might be expected, the Erie sample was almost exclusively white (96 percent) compared with about 75 percent white in Los Angeles. About 15 percent of the Los Angeles sample was black and about 10 percent Spanish-origin. Several media exposure measures were used. These were constructed from responses to a battery of questions about media-use patterns that was asked of respondents across five waves of the panel survey. For each category -- daily newspaper news pages, local television news, network television news and news magazines -- respondents were asked their normal pattern of use and their frequency of exposure in the previous week. Respondents were scored on the basis of their responses in each interview. These scores were summed across interviews and averaged to produce exposure measures for each medium.[21] A measure on participation in conversations about the campaign was constructed in similar fashion. And a measure on attention to the campaign was reflected in the respondent's response to a question asking how much attention he or she was paying to the campaign. All in all, Erie respondents professed a greater interest in the campaign than Los Angeles respondents. (Table 3) Median scores on the media-exposure indices

showed that Erie respondents ranked somewhat higher on exposure to the daily newspaper news pages and to network television news, but somewhat lower on exposure to local television news and to news magazines. Los Angeles had a higher median score on the political discussion index. (Tables 4 - 8)

As for the dependent variable, the measure of political information holding represented the number of correct responses respondents gave to questions asking what Jimmy Carter's and Gerald Ford's positions were on seven issues -- defense spending, welfare spending, public works jobs policy, crime policy, wage and price controls, busing and tax policy. Respondents were presented with a seven-point continuum in which the correct response was presented at one end and an opposite, incorrect response was presented at the other end. If a respondent's response fell toward the correct end of the continuum, it was coded as a correct response. If a response fell toward the incorrect end of the continuum or if the respondent answered "don't know," that was coded as an incorrect response. The correct responses were summed to form an index. The correct response on the issues was determined either directly from statements made in candidate speeches or indirectly from news media reports about the candidates' positions on the issues.[22] Though the questions about candidate issue positions were asked in each of five personal-interview waves, only responses provided in the October wave were used in these analyses. The earlier responses were eliminated here because the primary concern is with the ultimate contribution that media richness media/poorness may have made to political information holding levels. Patterson's initial analyses of these data show that knowledge levels generally increased during the campaign.[23]

The mass communication and political science literature suggested that several factors are known to be related positively to political information

holding. These include education, age, media exposure, interpersonal communication about political affairs and interest in political affairs.[24] Direct measures were used for age, education and media exposure levels, as noted above. Interpersonal communication about political affairs was operationalized by using the index on political conversations Patterson provided. Political interest was tapped with the responses to the question about how much attention the respondent was paying to the campaign.

The key independent variable was the media richness/media poorness of the community in which the respondent lived, a dichotomous variable in these analyses. Los Angeles was considered the media-rich environment and Erie the media-poor environment, based on the number of mass communication channels available to community residents. Indeed, as Patterson notes, Los Angeles had many more mass communication channels available to its citizens than did Erie. Los Angeles had two independently owned daily newspapers, several special-interest publications, seven very high frequency (VHF) television stations and several UHF stations. The three major commercial television networks had affiliates in both cities, but in Erie two of those affiliates were on the less-powerful UHF band. In Los Angeles, all three network affiliates were VHF stations.

A hierarchical regression technique was used to test the three hypotheses presented previously. The variables were entered into the regression equation in three blocks. Education and age were entered in the first block; media exposure, political interest and interpersonal communication were entered in the second; and the dummy-coded media richness/media poorness variable was entered as the last block. For the second and third hypotheses, the variables were entered into regression equations in four blocks. The first three blocks were

identical to those used to test the first hypothesis. The fourth block, in each case, was a multiplicative interaction term. For Hypothesis Two, the interaction term was education by media richness/media poorness. For Hypothesis Three, the interaction term was political interest by media richness/media poorness.

Results

For each hypothesis, an incremental F test was used to assess whether the final term entered into the regression equation was responsible for a significant increase in the variance accounted for in the dependent variable. For each hypothesis, an F ratio with a probability of less than .05 was considered evidence of support for the hypothesis. For Hypothesis One, the media richness variable contributed an additional 3.18 percentage points to the variance accounted for in the regression equation. (Table 9) Though the contribution to variance explained was small, it was significant at the .05 alpha level.[25] In all, this main-effects regression equation accounted for 24.52 percent of the variance in the dependent variable.

For Hypothesis Two, the interaction of media richness and education contributed an additional 0.48 percentage point to variance accounted for by the regression equation. (Table 10) Again, though the change was small, the F ratio exceeded the specified alpha level and the sign of the standardized regression coefficient was negative, indicating the change occurred in the direction hypothesized.

For Hypothesis Three, the interaction of media richness and political interest contributed an addtional 0.22 percentage point to the variance accounted for by the regression equation. (Table 11) The F ratio did not exceed the specified alpha level, though the sign of the standardized regression coefficient again was negative, which was the direction hypothesized.

To gain a better understanding of the interaction between education and the richness of the media environment of the communities studied, mean scores on the dependent variables were computed for Los Angeles and Erie across four educational levels. The means were adjusted to account for the effects of age, media exposure, political interest and interpersonal communication about political affairs. The adjusted means, plotted in Graph 1, converge at the highest educational level, apparently indicting that the media-rich environment contributed little to political information holding levels at that education level. However, there are differences in the hypothesized direction for the other three educational levels. T tests on the differences between those respective sets of means indicated the differences were significant at an alpha level of .05.

Discussion

It is probably best to start out the discussion of results by pointing out the formidable obstacles confronting someone wishing to use the community as the unit of analysis, particularly if that research is not looking at some kind of widely recorded behavior, such as voting. Most national samples would not offer a sufficient number of respondents in enough communities to allow careful tests of hypotheses such as those examined in this paper. Findings from relatively large samples in a relatively small number of communities are limited in their generalizability. Collecting data from large numbers of respondents in large number of communities takes far more money than most mass communication researchers have. One is left with ony unpleasant options. The first would be to abandon questions that seek to understand community-level media effects. Yet these seem to be important questions from both theoretical and policy standpoints. Another option is to attempt to investigate such questions, even when

available data are not particularly well-suited to the task. These "imperfect" tests, if repeated often enough in many communities, can at least build a body of circumstantial evidence to support or refute notions that a relationship, such as one between media richness/media poorness and political information holding, appears to exist. The point is, that in the absence of the "ultimate" tests of such hypotheses, we may not necessarily be best off with no tests at all. It is in this light that the results here should be considered, tenuous as they are, for at minimum they are generally consistent with the findings of Stempel, Clarke and Fredin, and Chaffee and Wilson -- that media richness does seem to be associated with certain effects at the community level.

The primary threat to the validity of the interpretation offered here concerns whether it is actually the media richness/media poorness of the communities that is contributing to the incremental increase in the dependent variable when the dummy-coded variable is entered into the equation. Though efforts were made to control for other factors believed to contribute to variance in the dependent variable, the study design could not directly take into account all potentially important variables that may contribute to the apparently higher levels of political information holding in Los Angeles. One obvious factor may be that the topics covered by the mass media in Los Angeles differed substantially with the topics covered by the mass media in Erie. To the extent that that happened, it could conceivably be the only significant impact of media richness/media poorness and could possibly account for all the added variance in the dependent variable. This, however, isn't a very satisfying explanation. It ignores other variations in communities' media environments that even the casual observer could detect. Such variations may go well beyond the reach of typical

content analytic schemes to matters like content quality (both reportage and display), media accessibility, media promotion and the complementarity of various media in a community. Having said all this, it should be noted that in these particular analyses, content of the Erie and Los Angeles papers, which Patterson says have the biggest impact of any of the media on political information holding, is more similar than different in terms of topics covered. The number of stories reported about the so-called substance of the campaign and the percentage of total campaign coverage devoted to substance stories is about the same for both the Erie papers and the Times.[26] Presumably, though, the Times' stories were longer, because it is a larger newspaper though this could be one artifact of the richness of the media environment. Other media-related factors that could have contributed to the higher information levels in Los Angeles would include campaign advertising[27] and the skill and sophistication of the campaign organizations in the two communities. Factors not related to the media might include the quality (as opposed to quantity, which is what is measured here) the respondents' education, pre-existing levels of information about the political philosophies of the various parties (which could tip respondents to differences in candidate issue positions) and even the nature and quality of interpersonal communication among citizens in the communities.

Again, because of this study's limitations, it is probably best of view the findings in the context of previous similar research. To their credit, the findings are in line with those of Stempel, Clarke and Fredin and Chaffee and Wilson, which suggest that the media richness/media poorness (or competitiveness, in most formulations) of a community can have discernible and important audience effects. Byond that, the results here suggest such effects may not be equiva-

lent across all community subgroups, which appears to be a novel finding. The results suggest an interaction effect between media richness/media poorness and education, though it is small. At this level of analysis, it's difficult to know what constitutes an effect of "significant" magnitude. No such interaction occurred for political interest, although the failure there may be due to measurement problems.[28] Ultimately, the interaction effects between media richness/media poorness and other factors may be of the most interest. Subsequent research may be able to pinpoint differential effects among population subgroups for voting behavior, decision-making, campaign involvement and attitude formation, among other things.

Perhaps the biggest challenge of future research in this area has to do with level of analysis that is appropriate for these sorts of questions. Concepts employed in the above analyses, for the most part, tend to be at the individual level (political information holding, media exposure, etc.) Yet the goal is to look at system-level effects. Two questions seem important:

--What is the appropriate level at which to look at the media environment? From the perspective of the individual or as a system-level concept?

--How does one go about operationalizing such concepts as political information holing, media exposure, etc., at a systems level?

Footnotes

1. DeFleur, M., and E. Dennis. (1981) Understanding Mass Communication. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

2. Weiss, P. (March-April 1983) "Covering for the Bulletin." Columbia Journalism Review, 21. pp. 47-49.

3. Friendly, J. (1983) "On the Eve of the Convention, Newspaper Publishers Say Brighter Days Lie Ahead." The Sunday New York Times, April 24, p. 24.

4. Siebert, F., T. Peterson and W. Schramm. (1956) Four Theories of the Press. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press.

5. Nestvold, Karl J. (1973) "Diversity in Local Television News." Journal of Broadcasting, 17:3, pp. 345-352.

6. For example, R. Nixon and R.L. Jones. (1956) "The Content of Non-Competitive vs. Competitive Newspapers." Journalism Quarterly 33:2, pp. 299-313. G. Rarick and B. Hartman. (1966) "Effects of Competition on One Daily Newspaper's Content." Journalism Quarterly 43:3, pp. 459-463. D.H. Weaver and L.E. Mullins. (1975) "Content and Format Characteristics of Competing Daily Newspapers." Journalism Quarterly 52:2 pp. 257-264. G.H. Stempel III. (1973) "Effects of Performance of a Cross-Media Monopoly." Journalism Monographs 29.

7. Choffee, S. and D. Wilson. (1977) "Media Rich, Media Poor: Two Studies of Diversity in Agenda-Holding." Journalism Quarterly, 54:3, pp. 466-476.

8. Nixon and Jones. (1956) op. cit.; Rarick and Hartman. (1966) op. cit.; Weaver and Millins. (1975) op. cit.

9. Stempel. (1973) op. cit.

10. Lembert, J. (1974) "Content Duplication by the Networks In Competing Evening Newscasts." Journalism Quarterly 51:2 pp. 238-244.

11. Nestvold. (1973) op. cit.

12. Einsiedel, E.F. and J.P. Winter. (1983) "Public Attitudes on Media Ownership: Demographic and Attitudinal Correlates." Journalism Quarterly 60:1 pp. 87-89. R. Nixon. (1954) "Changes in Reader Attitudes Toward Daily Newspapers." Journalism Quarterly 31:3 pp. 421-433.

13. Stempel. (1973) op. cit.

14. Clarke, P., and E. Fredin. (1978) "Newspaper, Television and Political Reasoning." Public Opinion Quarterly 42:1 pp. 143-160

15. Chaffee and Wilson. (1977) op. cit.

16. The findings were originally published in The Mass Media Election. (1980) New York: Praeger.

17. Tichenor, P., G. Donohue and C. Olien. (1980) Community Conflict and the Press. Beverly Hills: Sage. J. McLeod, C. Bybee and J. Durall. (1981) "Equivalence of Informed Political Participation." Communication Research 4:4 pp. 463-487.

18. For the analyses in this paper, only data from the 462 Erie respondents and the 337 Los Angeles respondents participating in the October wave of the survey were used. The smaller number of interviews in Los Angeles reflects both the elimination of non-citizens and non-English-speaking respondents in that city, and the fact that those in Los Angeles were not home as often, according to Patterson.

19. Because the panel was replenished, not all respondents participated in every possible wave.

20. The demographic information was compiled on the entire sample, though not on the particular subject of the sample used in the analyses done for this paper.

21. Patterson developed the indices used and tested their reliability.

22. For these analyses, the correct responses to questions on public works jobs, defense spending, welfare spending and tax policy were provided by Patterson. The correct responses to questions on busing, crime policy and wage and price controls were determined by the author.

23. Patterson. (1980) op. cit.

24. Palmgren, P. (1979) "Mass Media Use and Political Knowledge." Journalism Monographs 61.

25. The finding also was significant at $p < .001$, though that result is not reported because the official test was for $p < .05$.

26. The Times is used for comparison here because it is the more widely circulated of the two Los Angeles dailies. The Times reported 941 campaign stories during the campaign period of Jan. 1 to Nov. 2, 1976. During the same period, the Erie News reported 869 stories. Of the total stories reported, the Times had 361 and the News 216 on the candidates, which under the content analytic scheme Patterson used could include reportage on issues.

27. O'Keefe, G.J. and L.E. Atwood. (1981) "Communication and Election Campaigns." Handbook of Political Communication Beverly Hills: Sage.

28. Only a three-point continuum was offered for response to this measure, which raises questions about the appropriateness of using this item in a regression equation.

The author wishes to thank Thomas Patterson for making his data available for analysis.

TABLE 1

Distribution of age, Erie and Los Angeles

Age	Erie	Los Angeles
Under 25 years	14.1% (92)	15.3% (85)
25 to 34 years	25.7 (167)	25.7 (143)
35 to 44 years	13.5 (88)	12.7 (71)
45 to 54 years	17.4 (113)	16.2 (90)
55 to 64 years	14.6 (95)	12.2 (68)
65 years and over	14.7 (96)	18.0 (100)
	100.0 (651)	100.0 (55)
Median	42	41
High rank	86	88
Low rank	18	18

(N in parentheses)

TABLE 2

Distribution of education, Erie and Los Angeles

Education	Erie	Los Angeles
Some high school or less	26.5% (174)	20.6% (110)
High school graduate	39.6 (260)	21.6 (115)
Some college or voc-tech school	19.7 (129)	33.6 (179)
College graduate	7.5 (49)	12.8 (68)
At least some graduate school	6.7 (44)	11.4 (61)
	100.0 (656)	100.0 (533)
(N in parentheses)		
Median**	4.1	5.5
High rank	8	8
Low rank	1	1

** 4=high school graduate; 5=some voc-tech or college

TABLE 3

Distribution of campaign attention,
Erie and Los Angeles

Attention	Erie	Los Angeles
A lot	37.2%	28.4%
	(172)	(95)
Some	37.2	40.4
	(172)	(135)
A little	25.5	31.3
	(118)	(104)
	100.0	100.0
	(462)	(334)

(N in parentheses)

TABLE 4

Distribution of daily newspaper exposure index,
Erie and Los Angeles

Newspaper exposure	Erie	Los Angeles
1 (lowest)	17.8%	35.12%
2	11.3	14.5
3	11.3	9.2
4	16.1	14.3
5 (highest)	43.5	27.0
Mean	3.57	2.84
Median	4.08	2.50
Standard deviation	1.53	1.61

TABLE 5

Distribution of news magazine exposure index,
Erie and Los Angeles

Magazine exposure	Erie	Los Angeles
3-5 (lowest)	83.6%	76.1%
6-8	4.7	8.8
9-11	4.1	5.6
12-14 (highest)	7.6	9.5
Mean	4.33	4.77
Median	3.01	3.01
Standard deviation	2.99	3.29

TABLE 6

Distribution of network television exposure index,
Erie and Los Angeles

Network exposure	Erie	Los Angeles
1 (lowest)	14.6%	20.8%
2	21.9	26.2
3	15.8	17.3
4	19.8	18.5
5 (highest)	27.4	16.4
Mean	3.24	2.91
Median	3.28	2.63
Standard deviation	1.41	1.53

TABLE 7

Distribution of local television exposure index,
Erie and Los Angeles

Local exposure	Erie	Los Angeles
3-5 (lowest)	22.2%	13.8%
6-8	15.2	22.9
9-11	24.8	27.1
12-14 (highest)	37.8	36.2
Mean	9.76	10.41
Median	10.02	9.99
Standard Deviation	4.8	9.78

TABLE 8

Distribution of political discussion index,
Erie and Los Angeles

Political discussions	Erie	Los Angeles
3-5 (lowest)	32.1%	32.9%
6-8	46.2	38.7
9-11	13.5	18.2
12-14 (highest)	8.2	10.2
Mean	6.70	7.00
Median	6.01	6.02
Standard deviation	2.72	3.01

TABLE 9

Standardized regression coefficients, R-squared and change in R-squared in political information holding accounted for by control variables and media richness-media poorness of community.

	Betas for Block 1	Betas for Block 2	Betas for Block 3
Age	.1245	.0251	-.0100
Education	.2975	.1724	.1407
Campaign attention		.1021	.1231
News magazine exposure		.1115	.1060
Local TV exposure		-.0576	-.0803
Daily newspaper exposure		.0728	.1374
Political discussions		.2324	.2018
Network TV exposure		.0800	.1101
Media richness-media poorness			.1934
Cumulative R-squared	.0864	.2134	.2452
Change in R-squared		.1270*	.0318*

*p < .001

TABLE 10

Standardized regression coefficients, R-squared and change in R-squared in political information holding accounted for by control variables, media richness-media poorness of community and interaction between media richness-media poorness and education.

	Betas for Block 1	Betas for Block 2	Betas for Block 3	Betas for Block 4
Age	.1245	.0251	-.0100	-.0172
Education	.2975	.1724	.1407	.2071
Campaign attention		.1021	.1231	.1192
News magazine exposure		.1115	.1060	.1015
Local TV exposure		-.0576	-.0803	-.0793
Daily newspaper exposure		.0728	.1374	.1463
Political discussions		.2324	.2018	.2014
Network TV exposure		.0800	.1101	.1117
Media richness-media poorness			.1934	.3967
Media richness-media poorness by:				
Education				-.2295
Cumulative R-squared	.0864	.2134	.2452	.2499
Change in R-squared		.1270*	.0318*	.0048**

* $p < .001$
** $p < .05$

TABLE 11

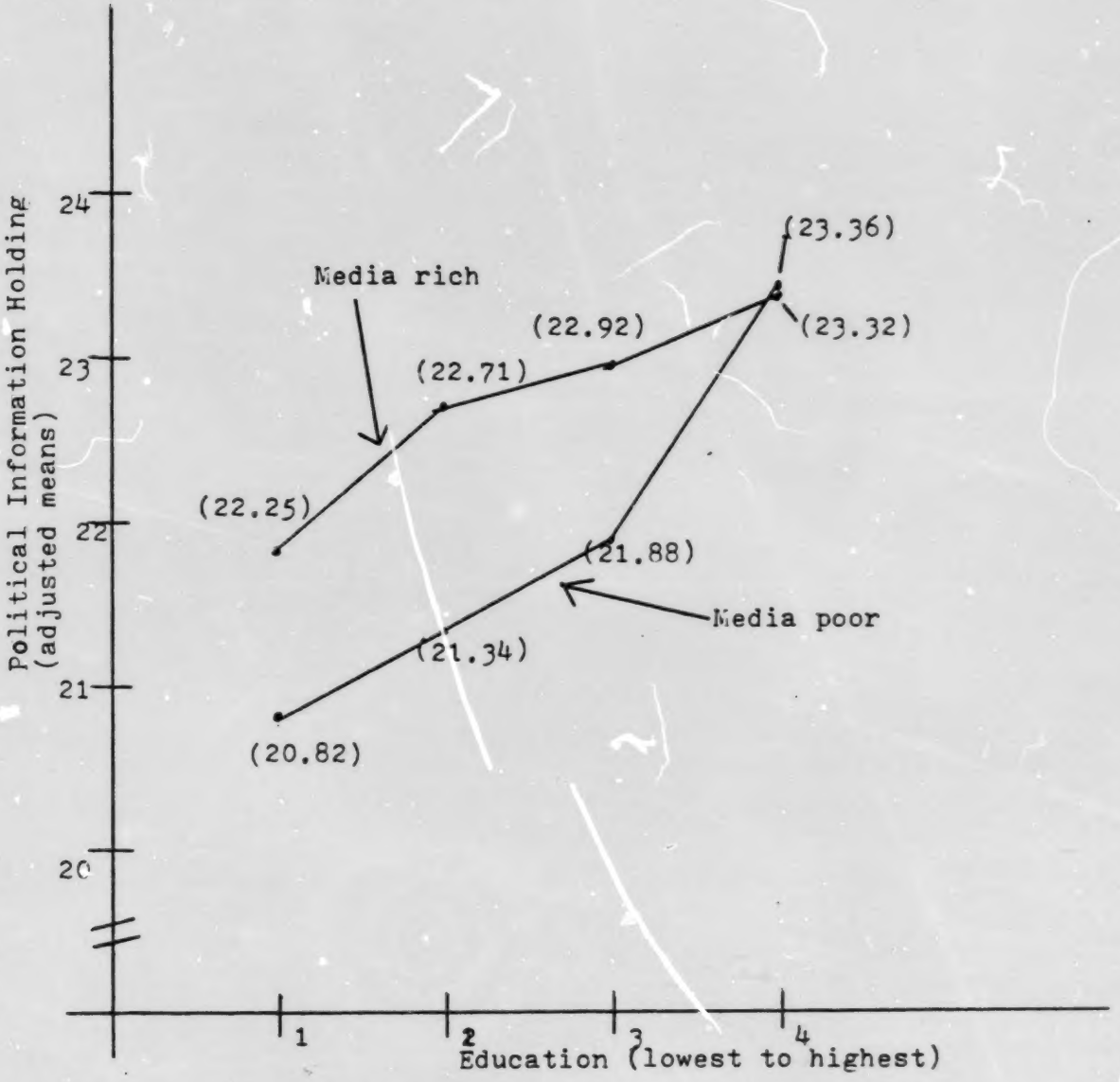
Standardized regression coefficients, R-squared and change in R-squared in political information holding accounted for by control variables, media richness-media poorness of community and interaction between media richness-media poorness and political interest.

	Betas for Block 1	Betas for Block 2	Betas for Block 3	Betas for Block 4
Age	.1245	.0251	-.0100	-.0634
Education	.2975	.1724	.1407	.1400
Campaign attention		.1021	.1231	.1649
News magazine exposure		.1115	.1064	.1058
Local TV exposure		-.0567	-.0803	-.0814
Daily newspaper exposure		.0728	.1374	.1351
Political discussions		.2324	.2018	.2046
Network TV exposure		.0800	.1101	.1089
Media richness-media poorness			.1934	.3189
Media richness-media poorness by:				
Political interest				-.1368
Cumulative R-squared	.0864	.2134	.2452	.2474
Change in R-squared		.1270*	.0318**	.0022

* p .001
**p .05

GRAPH 1

Means of political information holding for four education levels, adjusted for control variables.



1= some high school or less
2= high school graduate
3= some college of vocational education
4= college graduate or above